



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

Alexandria
Louisiana

Conservation in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin of Louisiana



*Improving
Water Quality
and Natural
Resources
Through
Partnerships*



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The Region...

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin area is a unique part of Louisiana. Many activities in the area affect the water quality of the rivers that ultimately drain into Lake Pontchartrain. Discharges from agricultural runoff, urban runoff, septic tank seepage, silviculture operations, wastewater treatment facilities, industrial wastewater treatment facilities and runoff from dairy farms in the Lake Pontchartrain basin can all affect water quality of the lake.

Agricultural producers use the natural resources of this region to produce various products, but they also work hard to ensure that their operations do not adversely impact the environment.

This publication highlights the efforts that private landowners are taking to improve water quality and the environment of the Lake Pontchartrain basin.

On the cover:

(clockwise from the top)

A Precision Auto Level stands at a job site where a zero-discharge waste management system is being installed.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist Joe Roetker (left) and Mr. Matthew Moore review Mr. Moore's grazing plan on his farm near Zachary, Louisiana.

Henry Bell, an NRCS conservation technician (closest to level), reviews construction progress of the installation of a zero-discharge waste management system.



The Commitment...

Agricultural producers are committed to improving the water quality of the rivers that drain into Lake Pontchartrain by installing zero discharge waste management systems and other conservation practices that improve water quality. In Tangipahoa Parish, 198 zero discharge animal waste systems have been installed since 1988! Over 228 Long-term agreements and contracts have been developed to improve water quality on farms and ranchers. These contracts cover 29,000 acres. Forty-four more systems are planned for installation over the next two years.

In Washington Parish, 60 special water quality project systems were installed by agricultural producers under the Agricultural Conservation Program. Also, 28 conservation systems were installed in conjunction with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. Other systems have been installed through other initiatives. All total, 97 water quality improvement systems have been installed in Washington Parish which are directly linked to USDA assistance and are helping to improve water quality in Lake Pontchartrain.



A newly-installed waste effluent distribution system is used to pump dairy waste effluent back onto pastures and hayfields providing additional nutrients for the fields.



NRCS workers inspect the collection pipe at a newly-constructed animal waste management system.

USDA Programs-- Making a Difference...

Cooperating farmers, ranchers, and landowners are working with agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and local soil and water conservation districts to reduce nonpoint source pollution in the Lake Pontchartrain basin. Landowners work with agency and district personnel to install waste management systems as well as other conservation practices through the following USDA programs:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Forestry Incentives Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Middle Tangipahoa Land Treatment Watershed

Other conservation efforts:

- Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
- Conservation Technical Assistance--Voluntary Conservation

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), established by the 1996 Farm Bill, provides voluntary cost-sharing for farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources. In the Lake Pontchartrain basin, agricultural producers have entered into 163 EQIP contracts covering over 10,500 acres. Through these contracts, producers have agreed to plan and install conservation practices and waste management systems to reduce nonpoint source pollution and improve the water quality of streams and rivers of the area.



Programs That Help The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Environment...

Other USDA programs help protect, enhance, and restore the environment of the Lake Pontchartrain basin.

The **Forestry Incentives Program**, or **FIP**, shares the costs of tree planting, timber stand improvement, and other related practices on non-industrialized private forest lands. There are 311 **FIP** contracts covering 12,838 acres.

The **Conservation Reserve Program**, or **CRP**, focuses on enrolling land that yields the highest environmental benefits when taken out of crop production. There are 194 **CRP** contracts covering 15, 497 acres.

The **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**, or **WHIP**, provides technical assistance and cost-sharing to landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat. Thirty-one **WHIP** contracts have been developed in the *Florida Parishes*.

The **Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative**, or **GLCI**, is a voluntary nationwide effort of concerned owners and managers of grazing lands to address resource needs and technical assistance on their lands. Over 100 cattle producers have been involved in **GLCI** projects or demonstrations.

Working with local soil and water conservation districts, NRCS and district personnel have worked with cooperating landowners to voluntarily develop over **5,000 soil and water conservation plans on 470,000 acres of land**. These are investments in conservation by private landowners without cost-sharing assistance.

The Middle Tangipahoa Land Treatment Watershed is a project that was approved to help protect the soil and water on a large are of land in middle Tangipahoa Parish. **Eighty contracts addressing dairy waste management have been developed on 5,252 acres.**



Shoreline Protection...

The northern shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain bears the brunt of waves generated by southerly winds and many areas need protection from the wave energy. Shoreline protection not only helps the shoreline itself, but also aids in improving water quality of Lake Pontchartrain because of reduced erosion along the shore. The Bogue Chitto-Pearl River Soil and Water Conservation District has teamed up with others to plant vegetation, primarily smooth cordgrass, on many shoreline areas. The following is a list of vegetative plantings conducted since 1990:

- 1990--Madisonville--Lighthouse Project--4,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1991--Goose Point Vicinity--10,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1992--Goose Point/CRD Christmas tree fences--8,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1994--Goose Point Interior Marsh--7,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1995--Goose Point Interior Marsh--3,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1996--Bayou LaCombe/Goose Point--8,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1997--Goose Point Marsh--8,500 feet of shoreline protected
- 1998--Goose Point Marsh--10,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 1999--Hog Island--8,000 feet of shoreline protected
- 2000--Hog Island--4,000 feet of shoreline protection planned

Some 66,500 feet of shoreline and interior marsh on the northern reaches of Lake Pontchartrain has been planted to smooth cordgrass to reduce shoreline erosion and help stabilize interior marsh ecosystems.

The Fritchie Marsh Project, a Breaux-Act project near Slidell, Louisiana (north of the Rigolets), has been advertised for construction. This project contains measures to improve hydrologic conditions of the area which will improve habitat conditions for fish and wildlife, reduce wetland loss, increase freshwater and sediment introduction, and provide water circulation in stagnant areas.



The Partnership...

Through cooperative alliances and partnerships, NRCS is working with the following to improve the water quality of the rivers and streams that drain into Lake Pontchartrain:

- Tangipahoa-St. Helena Soil and Water Conservation District
- Bogue Chitto-Pearl River Soil and Water Conservation District
- Feliciana Soil and Water Conservation District
- Capital Soil and Water Conservation District
- Cooperating farmers, ranchers, and landowners
- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry--Office of Soil and Water Conservation
- The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
- Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service
- Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation



Natural Resources Conservation Service

For more information on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or NRCS projects in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, please contact:

Donald W. Gohmert
State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
3737 Government Street
Alexandria, Louisiana 71302
Telephone: (318) 473-7751
Fax: (318) 473-7682
e-mail: don.gohmert@la.usda.gov

Visit our web page at <http://www.la.nrcs.usda.gov>

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